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President Denies Giving Israelis An 'Ultimatum'

CIA Change Lauded

By David S. Broder
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Ford said yesterday there is "considerable merit" in an advisory commission recommendation that the Central Intelligence Agency should normally be headed by someone other than a career intelligence officer.

In an interview in the Oval Office, the chief executive said there are "no plans" at this time to replace William E. Colby as the director of the CIA, but his comment on the question of a career man heading the agency appeared to leave Colby's future in doubt.

Mr. Ford said he had read a summary of the report on intelligence operations, submitted last week by a commission headed by former Ambassador Robert Murphy, which suggested among other things, that the director of intelligence "normally" come from outside the career service.

Colby has been an intelligence officer for 25 years and has come under considerable fire for his defense of the CIA's role in domestic surveillance and reported plotting of political assassinations overseas.

However, Mr. Ford told three interviewers that he thinks "basically" the CIA activities are being well-monitored from the White House now, and he warned strongly against investigations that "could be very harmful to the intelligence community."

He said the current Senate investigation of CIA "is right on the border" of incurring that risk, and cautioned again that it would be "very ill-advised" for that committee to hold any public hearings on assassinations. Its chairman, Sen. Frank Church of Idaho, has ruled out that course of action.

Mr. Ford also said he would "expect to be informed" by Attorney General Edward H. Levi before any government officials are prosecuted for past practices of the CIA, and "would certainly want to discuss the pros and cons" of such prosecutions.

In the hour-long conversation, the President also:

- Said he would make his proposals for

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New War Feared

By David S. Broder and Marilyn Berger
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President Ford said yesterday the United States was not trying to "impose a settlement" on the Middle East but would have to recommend a broad solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute unless the present deadlock in negotiations is broken.

Denying reports from Jerusalem of an American "ultimatum," Mr. Ford said the United States would have no choice but to suggest reconvening of the Geneva conference unless there is "a meeting of the minds" on an interim Egyptian-Israeli agreement. Continued deadlock, he said, would be "an open invitation" to another Middle East war.

In an Oval Office interview, the President said the present stalemate might be tolerated for several months or longer, but "the unanimous view is that if we don't get results . . . time will run out and war will be almost inevitable."

But Mr. Ford said he would "resist" trying to impose a settlement, because "it is obvious that for us to arbitrarily impose such a settlement would tend to get such a settlement off on a wrong foot."

Asked about reports from Jerusalem that the United States would refuse to support Israel at a reconvened Geneva conference, the President said, "Definitely not. We would not go to Geneva supporting anything other than a comprehensive settlement we felt would be fair to all the parties."

While Mr. Ford rejected the suggestion that he had issued an ultimatum to Israel, the message he gave personally to Israeli Ambassador Simcha Dinitz in a brief meeting last Friday was interpreted as leaving the Jewish state few alternatives if it wanted to retain U.S. political support.

There were varying reports in Israel. One said Mr. Ford had issued an "ultimatum." Another said that unless Israel accepted Egypt's terms for an interim agreement, the Geneva conference would be convened and the United States and Israel would "each have to go it alone." Following a briefing of a Knesset committee by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, parlia-

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decontrol of domestic oil prices later this week and would risk another veto battle with Congress if it blocked his action. He said he hoped for cooperation on a "responsible decontrol program," but said a veto of legislation extending the government's price control authority, now scheduled to expire on Aug. 30, is "an obvious possibility" if Congress balks his plan.

The price of newly discovered oil is already decontrolled, but Mr. Ford wants to free the price of existing oil supplies, over a period of years, in order to raise prices and decrease consumption. He denied his plan would mean $1-a-gallon gasoline.

• Said he thinks "there may be a growing feeling" among Democratic congressional leaders "that confrontation is wrong and compromise is right." Victorious in four veto battles with Congress, Mr. Ford said he was "ready to go halfway" in seeking legislative compromise with the Democrats.

• Defended his administration's economic policy against criticisms from black leaders and AFL-CIO President George Meany, and forecast rising employment with a 5 per cent inflation rate in coming months.

He ruled out special programs aimed at reducing unemployment among black teenagers or other groups with high rates of joblessness, saying that "if we improve the health of the economy . . . everyone will benefit. That's better than trying to focus on any one segment."

• Said he would "assume" that he will make a formal recommendation of Vice President Rockefeller as his runningmate, once he himself is nominated by the Republican convention, rather than opening the vice presidential choice to the delegates without instruction.

He said Rockefeller was a "moderate" like himself and said that "people who allege he's a liberal have not studied his record."

• Said he had recently reread Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's (D-Mass.) statement last fall, disavowing a 1976 presidential candidacy, and takes "at face value" Kennedy's refusal to run. "Those are very strong words," Mr. Ford said.

• Said it was "premature" to decide whether he would debate his opponent for President, but noted that in his 14 House campaigns, "if I was ever challenged by a contender, I accepted." Mr. Ford added, however, that he was "not sure debates are as productive on the national scene as they are on a local basis but I don't rule it out, either."

• Said he did not think the limited nuclear war tactics introduced by Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger in recent directives to the Strategic Air Command represent "any serious change" in American defense strategy.

• Said he had "no prior knowledge" of former President Nixon's plans to appear before Watergate prosecutors and grand jurors last week, adding that it was strictly the province of the special prosecutor's office.

In his comments on the CIA, Mr. Ford said he thought the White House now had effective control over the agency's actions. "I can't honestly say I know their day-to-day operations, but I know the general thrust . . . I don't try from the Oval Office to manage their 12,000 employees."

"We very, very badly need a strong intelligence community," he said, "and to destroy it would destroy a very important national security arm of the President."

He said his concern about the Senate investigation was that "if it goes much further with leaks or other unfortunate release of information by one means or another, we could seriously cripple our intelligence effort."

The President noted that "there is not much I can do" about congressional investigations, but said that if the investigators "should act irresponsibly, we might have to exercise limitations" on information given to the committee.

Ford Denies U.S. Gave Ultimatum

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mentary correspondents were told that Mr. Ford "stated aggressively" that unless there were an interim agreement, Israel and the United States would have to go their separate ways.

While rejecting the characterization of the American position as an "ultimatum" or an "imposed settlement," Mr. Ford was equally firm in denying suggestions that the lengthy reassessment of American Middle East policy, begun after the failure of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" last March, was a charade.

"Let me disabuse you of that," he said. "We are going to make a decision. And if there is no success in the step-by-step [negotiating] process, we will have to go to a broader, comprehensive program and recommend the reconvening of the Geneva conference."

The President said he had outlined that program "in generalities," to Prime Minister Rabin, but said he could recall nothing in their recent Washington meeting that could be characterized as an ultimatum.

1975 file photo by Frank Johnston—The Washington Post

Mr. Ford: "Ready to go halfway" in seeking legislative compromise with Democrats.

Both American and Israeli officials concede that they have never been able to agree on the terms of an overall settlement.

Rabin has already stated publicly that a U.S. plan on a general peace agreement "will not be to Israel's liking." Thus, in saying that the United States would have to recommend a broad solution at any reconvened Geneva conference, Mr. Ford was issuing what to Israel amounts to an implicit threat. For it is widely understood that no U.S. plan could contemplate the kind of long-term continued occupation of Arab territories Israel seems to be planning, especially as Washington is trying to improve ties with the Arabs.

Mr. Ford underscored this yesterday when he said that any solution he would recommend would "be fair to all the parties."